DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 247 828 HE 017 476

TITLE	Improving College Preparatory Programs through High School Accreditation. Recommendations of the California Postsecondary Education Commission. Commission Report 84-2.
INSTITUTION	California State Postsecondary Education Commission, Sacramento.
PUB DATE	30 Jan 84
NOTE	19p.
AVAILABLE FROM	California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1020 Twelfth Street, Sacramento, CA 95814.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Standards; *Accreditation (Institutions); *Accrediting Agencies; Agency Role; *College Preparation; College School Cooperation; *Curriculum Evaluation; *High Schools; Postsecondary Education; Pupil Personnel Services; Secondary Education; *Secondary School Curriculum; Staff Role

ABSTRACT

The development of high school accreditation in California and six recommendations for the accrediting process are considered. From 1884 until 1962, high school accreditation was conducted by the University of California. Since 1962, the Accrediting Commission for Schools of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) has been the accrediting agency. Currently, accreditation emphasizes the evaluation and improvement of the school as a whole. Recommendations are offered for: effecting changes in WASC's Accrediting Commission for Schools and its relationship with other WASC commissions; reshaping the accreditation procedures; assisting the Guidelines Review Committee; increasing the effectiveness of postsecondary members of visiting committees; improving the information on postsecondary education available to members of visiting committees; and expanding postsecondary responsibility for providing representatives for visiting committees. Eight accreditation criteria for a school's educational program and services are outlined: philosophy and objectives, organization, student personnel services, curricular program, cocurricular program, staff, school plant and physical facilities, and finance. Guidelines for self-study of the curriculum are also outlined. (SW)

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IMPROVING COLLEGE PREPARATORY PROGRAMS THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL ACCREDITATION

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CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION

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The California Postsecondary Education Commission was created by the Legislature and the Governor in 1974 as the successor to the California Coordinating Council for Higher Education in order to coordinate and plan for education in California beyond high school. As a state agency, the Commission is responsible for assuring that the State's resources for postsecondary education are utilized effectively and efficiently; for promoting diversity, innovation, and responsiveness to the needs of students and society; and for advising the Legislature and the Governor on statewide educational policy and funding.

The Commission consists of 15 members. Nine represent the general public, with three each appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly, the Senate Rules Committee, and the Governor. The other six represent the major educational systems of the State.

The Commission holds regular public meetings throughout the year at which it takes action on staff studies and adopts positions on legislative proposals affecting postsecondary education. Further information about the Commission, its meetings, its staff, and its other publications may be obtained from the Commission offices at 1020 Twelfth Street, Sacramento, California 95814; telephone (916) 445-7933.

IMPROVING COLLEGE PREPARATORY PROGRAMS THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL ACCREDITATION

Recommendations of the California Postsecondary Education Commission

CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION

1020 TWELFTH STREET, SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814

Commission Report 84-2

Adopted January 30, 1984

Contents

INTRODUCTION 1

The Development of High School Accreditation in California 1

Proposals for Change in the 1950s and '60s 2

Problems of the 1980s 3

RECOMMENDATIONS 5

1. Effecting Changes in the Accrediting Commission for Schools and Its Relationship with Other WASC Commissions 5

2. Reshaping the Procedures for Accreditation 6

3. Assisting the Guidelines Review Committee 9

4. Increasing the Effectiveness of Postsecondary Members of Visiting Committees 9

5. Improving the Information on Postsecondary Education Available to Members of Visiting Committees 10

6. Expanding Postsecondary Responsibility for Providing Representatives for Visiting Committees 10

Conclusion 12

REFERENCES 13

INTRODUCTION

1983 has been a year of major school reform in California. In coming years, educators, politicians, and community leaders who joined together to bring about this reform will turn their attention to determining its effectiveness in improving the quality of California's high schools and their graduates. One way to evaluate and increase this effectiveness is the high school accrediting process which, through a combination of institutional self-evaluation and outside peer review, continuously encourages schools to seek improvement.

Accreditation is the process of recognizing educational institutions and activities whose performance and integrity entitle them to the confidence of the educational community and the public. As of 1984, accreditation of high schools in California will be a century old:

- From 1884 until 1962, high school accreditation was conducted by the University of California and was concerned basically with assuring that the University's entering freshmen from each accredited school could meet the University's admission requirements.
- Since 1962, under the Accrediting Commission for Schools of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), high school accreditation has followed a more comprehensive procedure of emphasizing the evaluation and improvement of the school as a whole and not focusing so explicitly on the improvement of college preparatory programs.

The California Postsecondary Education Commission believes that now is an opportune time to assure that as one of its several functions, high school accreditation by WASC helps to improve college preparatory curricula more directly. In the following pages, after tracing the development of high school accreditation in California, the Commission suggests six steps to this end.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL ACCREDITATION IN CALIFORNIA

For 78 of the past 100 years, the practice of examining and rating California high schools was the responsibility of the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) of the University of California. The Board based its authority for accrediting high schools on powers delegated to the Academic Senate of the University by the Regents and further delegated by the Senate to the Board:

> It shall be the duty of the Board to accredit those schools in California which in its judgment maintain such courses of study and such standards of scholarship as will enable their graduates to meet the admission requirements of the University and subsequently to pursue university work with success (University of California Academic Senate Bylaw 64, 1939).

In order to be accredited by the University, a high school had to meet three standards:

1. The school offers a college preparatory curriculum which includes instruction in the subjects required for admission to the University.
2. Graduates of the school have made satisfactory scholarship records in their freshman year at institutions of higher learning as shown by college transcripts of record.
3. In the year in which application for accreditation is made, the school must have a graduating class that includes students who qualify for admission to the University.

In addition to these standards, the Board considered the following questions:

1. Does the faculty of the school have at least four teachers who devote practically full time to instruction in academic subjects and who are adequately trained in the areas in which they teach?
2. Are laboratory facilities and equipment for the eleventh and twelfth grade science courses adequate for satisfactory instruction?
3. Do the supervision, operation, facilities, and book collection of the school library meet the minimum standards as specified by the School Library Association of California?

4. Does the school maintain an organized program of counseling and guidance, including college preparatory guidance, with responsibility for these activities specifically assigned to designated members of the faculty or adminstrative staff?

5. Are administrative organization, classroom facilities, student and teaching loads, and marking standards satisfactory?

6. Is the school in operation for the number of days stipulated by State law for each school year?

All of these questions served to focus high school accreditation on University preparation. As the Board stated in 1957, the University's accreditation of a high school "is simply saying that the University may trust the judgment of this school about the academic preparation of the students it recommends" (by means of grades on the A to F requirements). During the late 1940s and the 1950s, however, this focus of accreditation was increasingly viewed as unnecessarily narrow by educators outside the University, while during the same time some University officials were searching for a way in which the University might transfer its accrediting responsibilities to some other agency.

PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE IN THE 1950s AND '60s

During the 1950s, the California Association of Secondary School Administrators (CASSA) developed an alternative to the University's accreditation of high schools. Its alternative involved self-examination and outside evaluation of all programs of a high school, rather than only the college preparatory program. The Association sought the involvement of "school board and lay people, certificated and classified personnel, [and] students in an appraisal of every aspect of school facility and function," and its appraisals aimed to "provide a basis from which to restate goals in the light of established needs, identify problems that need attention, indicate strengths that may be used as a basis for continual improvement, and provide data for use in analyzing progress and establishing steps for developing a more effective school program" (California Association of Secondary School Administrators, c. 1959, flyleaf).

In the late 1950s, the University's Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools studied the Association's evaluation procedures, and it concluded that, with modifications, these procedures could become an acceptable basis for accreditation. But rather than endorsing CASSA as an alternative agency for accreditation, in 1960 it voted that "an association of college and university representatives, together with secondary school administrators, in joint action, would be a better arrangement for the determination of the accrediting of high schools" (p. 16).

The intention behind the Board's action is now not altogether clear. It may have meant to support an accrediting commission that had both representatives of high schools and colleges, or it may have preferred a tripartite accrediting association of the type WASC finally became, with three autonomous commissions. In either case, however, the desire for secondary and post-secondary representatives acting jointly "in the determination of the accrediting of high schools" expresses an ideal, the Commission believes, that has not yet been fully realized.

Meanwhile, the Legislature had expressed interest in launching State accreditation of high schools to assure that they meet the minimum standards required by State law. Draft legislation was developed that would have empowered the Board of Education to "adopt a system for the accreditation of high schools and to adopt rules and regulations setting forth the standards for such accreditation," but representatives of the Western College Association, among others, successfully opposed the legislation.

During much of the decade preceding the formation of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the Western College Association was discussing an accrediting association which would incorporate accreditation for high schools and junior colleges as well as senior colleges. In 1962, WASC was formed as the regional accrediting body for California and Hawaii and its three commissions undertook accreditation: the Accrediting Commission for Schools (first named the Accrediting Commission for Secondary Schools), the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, and the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities.

As a result of the creation of the Accrediting Commission for Schools, the University agreed to abandon publication of its list of accredited high schools, although its Board of Admissions

and Relations with Schools continued to gather statistical information about the scholastic achievement of freshmen and reported this information to school authorities. As the Board recorded in its minutes for January 11, 1963, "the work of assisting schools in the improvement of their college preparatory programs would continue independently of the accrediting function. Indeed, . . . University staff members might even find their usefulness in this regard enhanced if the accrediting process were to be conducted by others."

The transfer of responsibility for accrediting high schools from the University to the Accrediting Commission for Schools changed not only the process but also the meaning of accreditation. The Accrediting Commission defined a major function of accreditation as improvement of school quality. As it states in its "Procedures" booklets:

> School accreditation is a means used by the Accrediting Commission for Schools of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges for the purposes of:
>
> 1. Fostering excellence in elementary and secondary education.
> 2. Encouraging school improvement through a process of continuous self-study and evaluation.
> 3. Assuring a school and its public that the school has clearly-defined and appropriate educational goals and objectives, has established conditions under which their achievement can reasonably be expected, appears to be accomplishing them substantially, and can be expected to continue to do so.

In moving to "school improvement" as a central function of accreditation, California became the last state in the nation to adopt this position. Many states had initiated the accreditation of high schools by using the "university examiner" model, but by 1917, all 48 states with the exception of California were under regional accrediting associations which undertook a more comprehensive evaluation and accreditation process than that followed by universities.

Despite the assumption of responsibility for high school accreditation by the Accrediting Commission, the University continued its own assessment process of college preparatory programs apart from WASC accreditation. There thus appeared to be no special need for WASC to focus attention on these particular programs. In encompassing the entire program of the comprehensive high school, the new accreditation process was not only no longer solely oriented toward college admissions, its organizational structure was no longer University oriented. Indeed, the Accrediting Commission for Schools has included no representatives of colleges or universities except when representatives from the WASC Senior Commission and Junior Commission who serve on the School's Commission have been from a college and not from the general public.

PROBLEMS OF THE 1980s

While a lack of postsecondary education involvement in WASC's high school accreditation process may seem unfortunate in retrospect, it was understandable at the time. Secondary educators enjoyed their newly won autonomy over high school accreditation, and the University appreciated its freedom from a responsibility that had at times created friction in its relations with high schools.

Moreover, much in the structure and process of the new approach to accrediting high schools, such as the comprehensive institutional self-study based on guidelines adopted by the Accrediting Commission for Schools, and the visiting team evaluation by a group of peers from other institutions, was a substantial improvement in school evaluation. The new approach served the needs of the 1960s and '70s, and with minor adjustments can serve those of the 1980s and '90s. But adjustments are needed to respond to both State and national efforts aimed at building a stronger cooperative relationship between secondary and postsecondary education:

- College preparation continues to be a major function of most high schools. Each year, California's high schools send approximately 60 percent of their graduates (about 160,000 in all) on to public and private colleges and universities in the State, while uncounted numbers of other students enroll in non-degree-granting institutions of postsecondary education such as business, technical, and allied health schools.
- College and university preparation remains a State-mandated purpose of public schools. Each school district in California that maintains a high school is required by law to provide "a course of study designed to prepare prospective students for admission to state

colleges and universities" (*Education Code* Section 51224).

- In recent years, the college preparation of many high school graduates has been inadequate for college success. California's public colleges and universities have had to spend some $82 million annually in remedial programs and services to overcome inadequacies in the academic skills.
- Finally, the California State University and the University of California are changing their admission requirements and stating their academic expectations in ways that may necessitate change in the college preparatory programs of California's public high schools.

The centennial of high school accreditation in California thus constitutes an appropriate time to encourage adaptation of WASC's accrediting process to new needs, not by discarding present structures and procedures, but instead by supplementing them in six specific ways -- by (1) effecting changes in the membership of the Accrediting Commission for Schools and in the relationships among the three WASC commissions and its Board of Directors, (2) reshaping the Accrediting Commission's procedures for accreditation; (3) assisting the work of the Guidelines Review Committee in this revision; (4) increasing the effectiveness of postsecondary representatives of visiting committees; (5) improving the preparation of members of these committees; and (6) expanding postsecondary responsibility for providing representatives for visiting committees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Effecting Changes in the Accrediting Commission for Schools and Its Relationship with Other WASC Commissions

The 21-member Accrediting Commission for Schools of WASC oversees the accrediting of public, private, and parochial elementary and secondary schools in California and Hawaii. The Commission hires the Executive Director, develops criteria for accreditation, adopts the guidelines used in the self-study by applicants for accreditation, and grants or denies accreditation to an applicant school based on the self-study and its visiting committee's recommendation.

The membership of the Commission consists of 15 elementary and secondary school administrators, two school teachers, two members of the general public (representing the California School Boards Association and the California Congress of Parents and Teachers, Inc.) and two members representing the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities and the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. The absence of direct postsecondary representation is significant in view of several facts:

- The University of California discontinued its responsibility for accreditation two decades ago on the grounds that "an association of college and university representatives, together with secondary school administrators, *in joint action* would be a better arrangement for the determination of the accrediting of high school" (italics added).
- During the 1950s, the accrediting commission of the California Association of Secondary School Administrators (one of the major predecessors of the present Accrediting Commission) included among its 15 members three higher education representatives -- one from each of California's three public segments of postsecondary education.
- In 1960, the legislative proposal to give the State Board of Education the responsibility of accrediting high schools in California would have created an 18-member commission with five representatives from postsecondary education -- one each from the University of California, the State Colleges, the public junior colleges, independent colleges and universities, and church-related institutions.

It does not appear that including postsecondary representatives on WASC's Accrediting Commission for Schools would have given it any problems during the 1960s. Nor should it today, when the benefits of and need for school-college coordination are far more evident.

Closely related to the need for substantial postsecondary representation on the Accrediting Commission for Schools is the need for a close working relationship between the three autonomous commissions of WASC and leadership on the part of the WASC Board of Directors to initiate inter-commission policy discussions. The Postsecondary Education Commission's interest in a more substantive interrelationship among the three commissions is not the first time this concern has been raised. In his *History of the Western College Association, 1924-1974*, Francis H. Herrick, a former Executive Secretary-Treasurer of WCA, made these comments on the independence of the WASC commissions (p. 48):

> Even a cursory examination of the constitution showed that the three commissions were independent of each other as well as constituted in different ways. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges was a facade for them; it had no organization behind it and no income of its own. The president was only a presiding officer at Board meetings, and the Board of Directors had little to direct, for its principal function was publication of a directory of accredited schools and colleges. The three separate commissions were what really mattered, for each was made responsible for maintaining its own administrative structure and fiscal policy. On the surface the Western Association of Schools and Colleges seemed similar to the five other regional accrediting agencies, but the reality was different. The possibility existed that at some future time the facade of unity would become a solid structure, but the immediate problem before the Western College Association was to get what had

been finally agreed upon into effective operation.

With the current moves toward greater communication and cooperation between the various levels of education in other parts of the education system, the California Postsecondary Education Commission believes it is timely to review the organization and membership of the WASC commissions with the objective of creating a more integrated structure of accreditation.

Thus the California Postsecondary Education Commission encourages the WASC Board of Directors to initiate inter-level policy discussions between and among the WASC commissions in areas where cooperation could result in more effective evaluation and accreditation measures. It encourages the three WASC commissions to consider ways in which postsecondary institutions can have substantial representation on the Accrediting Commission for Schools, including (1) increasing the number of representatives from the Senior Colleges and Community Colleges commissions that sit on the Schools commission, (2) ensuring that these representatives are actively engaged in postsecondary education (rather than being general public representatives), and (3) adding additional members from both two-year and four-year institutions as full members of the Accrediting Commission for Schools.

2 Reshaping the Procedures for Accreditation

The heart of WASC's accrediting process is the institutional self-study, which for high schools is shaped by evaluation guidelines adopted by the Accrediting Commission for Schools and which, along with its visiting team's recommendation, is the informational basis for the Commission's decision to grant or deny accreditation to a school. The Accrediting Commission has developed separate procedures for appraising elementary schools; junior high, middle, and intermediate schools; comprehensive high schools; Catholic high schools; continuation high schools; adult high schools; and regional occupational centers. In the evaluation process, the Accrediting Commission emphasizes that each individual school's goals are to be examined for their appropriateness to the type of school and that the school is then to be evaluated on its success in reaching its goal and in meeting the criteria the Commission has set forth. This approach provides flexibility in working with a wide variety of schools and minimizes the threat to local or private control which external standards might imply.

Each institution is guided through this self-evaluation process by means of the eight general "criteria for accreditation," reproduced on the opposite page. In its self-study report, the institution is asked to describe its activities or services related to each of the criteria. For example, regarding the fourth criterion concerning the curriculum, the Accrediting Commission's "Form A" for an institutional self-study asks the school to provide the information on curriculum development and its program of studies reproduced on page 8.

While the open-ended nature of these requests encourages a school in its self-study efforts to describe its resources, programs, and product fully without running the risk of an invidious comparison with external standards or models, they do not suggest any criteria by which the adequacy and effectiveness of the program should be judged. In practice, this absence of external standards and the emphasis on validating the school's own philosophy and goals unintentionally permit schools to aim their sights undesirably low. Several university representatives on visiting teams have noted that schools they had visited spoke highly of their college preparatory program when, in the judgment of these representatives, the level of curriculum content and the school's grading practices were far from adequate. These representatives suggest that clearer expectations regarding adequate college preparatory programs should be built into the accreditation procedures, particularly now that California colleges and universities have begun to issue specific information on adequate college preparatory curricula and expected competencies of entering students. Among these efforts are the *Statement on Competencies in English and Mathematics Expected of Entering Freshmen*, developed by an intersegmental committee of the Academic Senates of the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California; the booklet titled *Futures: Making High School Count*, prepared by the California Round Table on Educational Opportunity; and the work of the Articulation Council of California to develop regional communication and

CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION

Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges

A school shall be evaluated on the basis of the degree to which it is accomplishing the purposes and functions outlined in its own statement of objectives, and on the appropriateness of those purposes and functions for an institution of its type. In addition, to qualify for accreditation, a school must give evidence of adequately meeting the following criteria which are established as general guidelines to determine the effectiveness of a school's educational program and services.

The school will have:

1. Philosophy, Goals, and Objectives
   A statement of philosophy approved by the governing board of the school. Goals and objectives, consistent with the philosophy, should be systematically developed and reviewed by the community, administration, staff, students, and governing board. There should be a continuous evaluation of progress toward these goals and objectives.

2. Organization
   A clearly-defined organizational structure whereby these goals and objectives are being carried out. This structure should specify: the functions of the administration, staff and students; the administrative relationships among these groups; and, the limits of authority and responsibility. This structure should be demonstrably workable so that the working relationships and communication among all concerned are effective.

3. Student Personnel Services
   Student personnel services that identify the needs, interests, aptitudes, and goals of all its students, and provide these students with adequate educational, career, personal, and social guidance.

4. Curricular Program
   A curricular program with written course descriptions and objectives that provides all its students with suitable courses of instruction, consistent with the school's philosophy and goals, and the students' needs, abilities, and interests.

   There should be adequate instructional resources to implement the curricular program.

   The curriculum should be the object of continuous evaluation and development by faculty, students, and administration. This process should be concerned with the nature, scope, and effectiveness of individual courses, and also with their interrelationship in the curriculum as-a-whole.

5. Co-Curricular Program
   Appropriate co-curricular offerings that supplement the formal instruction of the school. These should be responsive to the students' needs and interests and should draw upon special skills and enthusiasms among students and faculty alike.

6. Staff
   A well-qualified staff that effectively fulfills its responsibilities.

7. School Plant and Physical Facilities
   A school plant and physical facilities that enable the staff to implement effectively the school program.

8. Finance
   Continuing financial support adequate to provide an educational program including the necessary staff, physical facilities, instructional resources, and other support services.

   The budgetary procedures should involve those who are responsible for implementing the school's programs and services.

Source: Accrediting Commission for Schools, 1981, p. 33b

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GUIDELINES FOR SELF STUDY OF THE CURRICULUM

Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges

V. CURRICULUM

A school should recognize the essential value of planned evaluation and revision of the curriculum. This indicates the probability that the school is making a good attempt to meet the needs of its students and the community in which they live.

A. Curriculum Development.

1. Describe the structure and procedures for curriculum development (e.g., leadership, participants, making and implementing decisions, etc.).

2. Describe the provisions for articulation of curriculum with feeder schools and schools receiving your graduates.

3. Describe recent curriculum studies undertaken by individual staff members, committees, or total staff.

4. Indicate areas of strengths and areas of needed improvement in the curriculum development procedures.

5. Comment on any unique or unusual curriculum development procedures that have not been explained sufficiently above.

B. Program of Studies.

1. Curriculum-related school publications (e.g., schedule of classes, course descriptions, course outlines) should be available to the Committee at the time of visitation.

2. Indicate whether or not the school has available special education classes (e.g., educationally mentally retarded, educationally handicapped, physically handicapped, mentally gifted, etc.). Respond with a brief description of the program.

3. Describe and evaluate the system the school uses in grouping students for instruction.

4. Do teachers make use of a variety of teaching methods (e.g., inquiry, small group, team teaching, lecture, etc.)? Explain briefly.

5. Describe any aspect of the program of studies that should be considered in its evaluation but has not been requested or reported elsewhere.

6. In summary, make a general evaluation of the program of studies, indicating major areas of strength and major areas of needed improvement. Indicate additional courses of instruction which are anticipated or desired.

Source: Accrediting Commission for Schools, 1980, p. 35.

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articulation networks involving both secondary and postsecondary institutions.

A major step in improving the sensitivity of the high school accreditation process to postsecondary standards would be to ensure that the Accrediting Commission's procedures more clearly reflect the expectations of colleges and universities. Currently, the scattered references in its self-study guidelines to college preparatory programs make it difficult both for school officials and visiting team members to determine the adequacy of the school's efforts on behalf of college-bound students.

The Postsecondary Education Commission believes that the accrediting process should treat the college preparatory program as an integrated function in order to give more recognition and coherence to its evaluation.

Thus the Commission recommends that for schools which seek, among their purposes, to prepare students for college, WASC procedures should be organized in a way that encourages school officials to evaluate their college preparatory services as an integrated program of curriculum offerings, academic advisement, diagnostic testing, other student services, and related activities such as program planning, articulation of course work with colleges, and student follow-up.

3 Assisting the Guidelines Review Committee

While there is every indication the Accrediting Commission for Schools is open to revising its guidelines as suggested above, its advisory committee for this purpose is composed entirely of secondary school educators and has no formal links with postsecondary representatives who can most readily provide the necessary information. The Guidelines Review Committee of the Accrediting Commission, which revises the several forms of the Procedures on a regular three-year cycle, might possibly add postsecondary educators to its membership, but a more efficient means of including postsecondary references in the guidelines would be for the Committee to meet periodically with academic representatives of postsecondary institutions and Commission staff who would review the procedures under consideration and help the Committee by recommending changes that reflect the latest developments among the postsecondary institutions.

Thus the Postsecondary Education Commission recommends that representatives of the four segments of postsecondary education jointly collect updated materials for consideration by the Guidelines Review Committee and meet periodically with the Committee to discuss updating the accrediting procedures relating to college preparatory programs in the secondary schools.

4 Increasing the Effectiveness of Postsecondary Members of Visiting Committees

The Accrediting Commission for Schools grants accreditation to schools based on visiting committee conclusions and recommendations stemming from a three and one-half day visit to each school. The size of visiting committees ranges from three to seven members, depending on the size of the school. In each case, one member is a representative of a college or university, while the others are typically a school principal, a classroom teacher, representatives of district or county offices and the State Department of Education, and a school board member or other lay person. Visiting committee members are appointed by the Executive Director of the Accrediting Commission from a list of members of the education community who have expressed an interest in assisting in this important function. During 1982-83, for example, a total of 132 college and university personnel served on such visiting committees -- 70 of them from the State University, 28 from Community Colleges, 23 from the University of California, and 11 from independent colleges and universities. Among the 132, 36 participated in their first school visitation, but 71 had participated in five or more visits and 32 in ten or more.

The participation of these postsecondary representatives on visiting committees is especially crucial because it is currently the only point in the carefully drawn accrediting process (including the formation and revision of guidelines, development of self-study reports, committee review and recommendations, and the Accrediting Commission's decision) at which any contribution from postsecondary education is regularly sought. But rather than using their particular expertise as postsecondary representatives to

review specific areas such as the college preparatory curriculum, college counseling, grading standards, school-college cooperative activities, or the school's use of student performance information supplied by colleges and universities, the postsecondary members serve as generalists, as do the other members of the committee.

Since the committee's work is in large part to validate the school's self-evaluation, the assignments of the committee members and the format of their report is dictated primarily by the outline and content of the school's own report, based on WASC's eight accreditation criteria and the school's departmental divisions. The list of committee assignments illustrated on the opposite page shows how a typical university professor ("Mr. C") may be utilized. Although all committee members can state their preferences for assignments, their small numbers practically ensure that they will spend most of the visit on areas in which they are not expert.

In seeking to assign committee members to their preferred areas, WASC endorses the use of specialists for the review of given areas of the high school program. Note, for example, in the list of committee assignments on the opposite page, that Mr. F, an industrial arts instructor, was assigned to review the industrial arts department; Ms. E, a special education administrator, was assigned to review that program; Mrs. D, a high school counselor, was assigned to review pupil personnel and the career center; and Mrs. B, a high school principal, was assigned to review school and community relationships. Nonetheless, the postsecondary representative does not function as a reviewer of the college preparatory program because the present visitation process does not encourage it.

The Postsecondary Education Commission believes that the work of visiting committees could be made more useful by ensuring as broad a representation of specialties as possible among the committee members and by assigning these individuals to areas which utilize their expertise.

Thus the Commission recommends that visiting committees to high schools should include two representatives from postsecondary institutions (one from a four-year institution and one from a two-year institution) whose foremost assignment should be to review aspects of the high school program directed toward college-bound students.

5 Improving the Information on Postsecondary Education Available to Members of Visiting Committees

Each autumn, the Accrediting Commission for Schools sponsors workshops for visiting committee members who will participate in visits during the academic year. Such preparatory workshops or some similar type of activity can be highly effective in training committee members to evaluate college preparatory programs more effectively, but more information needs to be made available to them:

- First, facts that colleges and universities send to the school about the academic performance of its recent graduates whom they enroll.
- Second, facts about colleges' and universities' diagnostic or placement tests in English and mathematics that the high school can use to measure the effectiveness of the curriculum and student learning on campus.
- Third, facts about changes in postsecondary expectations as reflected in admission requirements, the joint academic senates' competency statements, and in outreach activities.

Thus the Commission recommends that the segments of postsecondary education compile information on such matters as their information-sharing practices, testing programs, their admission requirements and expectations, and their outreach programs, and transmit it to the Accrediting Commission in a form that would be useful for presentation in the Commission's training program for prospective visiting committee members.

6 Expanding Postsecondary Responsibility for Providing Representatives for Visiting Committees

Accrediting Commission staff report that postsecondary participants are frequently absent at its autumn training sessions and that only a small percentage of those invited to participate in visits actually take part in them. Among those who do participate, less than 20 percent come from academic disciplines taught at the secondary level.

TYPICAL VISITING COMMITTEE AND COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman: Mr. A, District Assistant Superintendent

Mrs. B, High School Principal
Mr. C, University Professor, Counselor Education
Mrs. D, High School Counselor
Ms. E, Special Education Administrator
Mr. F, Industrial Arts Instructor
Mr. G, CPEC staff member

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

General Analysis

Library Media Service
Mr. G

School & Community Relationships
Mrs. B

Co-Extra Curricular Program
Mr. F and Ms. E.

Personnel Practices
Mrs. D and Ms. E

Health Services
Mrs. D and Mr. C

School Plant
Mr. F and Mrs. B

Variable Educational Opportunities
Mr. G

Local, National, & State Special Programs
Mrs. B and Mr. C

In-Service Training and Workshops in Curriculum Development
Mr. G and Mr. A

Career Center
Mrs. D and Mr. F

Program Analysis

Business Education
Mrs. D and Mr. F

English
Mr. G and Ms. E

Fine Arts
Ms. E

Foreign Language
Mrs. B and Mrs. D

Homemaking
Mr. C

Industrial Arts
Mr. F and Mr. C

Mathematics
Mr. G and Mr. A

Physical Education
Mr. F

Pupil Personnel Services
Mr. G and Mrs. D

Science
Mr. F and Mr. C

Social Studies
Mrs. B and Ms. E

Special Education
Ms. E and Mr. C

The Commission thus recommends that all segments of postsecondary education assume more responsibility for ensuring that appropriate representatives from the segments are available for both the autumn workshops and school visits, that each segment nominate the representatives it wishes to have serve each year, and that the Accrediting Commission for Schools assign postsecondary representatives to visiting committees from these lists of nominees.

CONCLUSION

Both secondary and postsecondary educators recognize that the problem of underpreparation of college students is serious and that no single segment can supply the remedy. Joint efforts to address the problem are underway by secondary and postsecondary educators in most parts of the educational enterprise. It is now an opportune time to increase these joint efforts in the area of accreditation as well.

Because of the essential college preparatory function that high schools perform, the California Postsecondary Education Commission believes that both secondary and postsecondary education will benefit from increased college and university involvement at appropriate points and in appropriate ways in the activities of the Accrediting Commission for Schools. The changes that it proposes in this report are relatively modest improvements to enhance a process that already has much to recommend it. Other policy issues not raised by this report will undoubtedly be addressed in a subsequent Department of Education study mandated in Senate Bill 813, and the Commission stands ready to assist both in furthering the objectives of this report and in cooperating where appropriate in any subsequent study.

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